

VZCZCXRO5518
RR RUEHROV
DE RUEHKH #0634 0691914
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 101914Z MAR 06
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1852
INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS KHARTOUM 000634

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ECPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [SOCI](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: Southern Sudan: Telecom Challenges

¶1. SUMMARY: The lack of reliable cell phone connectivity in Juba has made communications, and all operations, more difficult for the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS), local businesses, and the international community. Most organizations rely on Thuraya satellite phones, which are expensive and generally only work outdoors. On March 7, CG Juba Officials met with Elijah Biar Kuol, GoSS Under Secretary for Telecommunications and Postal Services, who said that Khartoum is not helping to alleviate the problems, and is preventing the GoSS from taking steps to resolve them itself. End Summary.

Is it One Country, Two Systems?

¶2. Kuol explained that the GoSS is currently in a dispute with the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC), which regulates telecom operators in Sudan. He said that the GoSS has requested part of the spectrum to grant telecom license independently, as well as their own exchange with direct access to Sudan's international gateway. Kuol believes this is justified under the "one country, two systems" arrangement in the CPA. The NTC has refused both requests.

¶3. As an alternative, Kuol said, the GoSS has asked for its share of government revenues from Mobitel, which operates in former garrison towns, but rarely functions. The NTC has also refused this request, asserting that it retains full control over the telecom sector. Kuol explained that the GoSS is in talks with telecom companies directly, but sanctions and the questions over their legal ability to grant licenses has discouraged legitimate companies.

Bypassing NTC, If Necessary

¶4. Kuol said that if this is not resolved, the south would be forced to seek its own country code and independent international gateway. He believes the communication difficulties are acute, threatening the operation of the entire government, but Khartoum is doing nothing. Expressing the level of distrust common among southern officials, Kuol also said that he has seen "Arabs" using their Mobitel cell phones in Juba, so the service difficulties must be intentional.

¶5. Bio note: Kuol is a Dinka from the Upper Nile Region. He was formerly the Deputy Director of the SPLM's communications agency. During the war, Kuol fought in the Upper Nile until the 1991 split. He remained with Garang and relocated to the areas outside of Torit and Juba.

WHITAKER